City of Toronto Cycling Survey

Conducted by The Centre for Active Transportation and the University of Toronto for the City of Toronto, 2023.

TORONTO

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

tcat

About Us

The Centre for Active Transportation:

The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) has a vision of vibrant cities with clean air, a healthy population, and a transportation system that prioritizes walking and riding bikes. Our mission is to advance knowledge and evidence to build support for safe and equitable streets for walking and cycling. We believe that active transportation plays a critical role in creating environmentally and economically sustainable cities.

The University of Toronto:

Founded in 1827, the University of Toronto (U of T) of has a long history of challenging the impossible and transforming society through the ingenuity and resolve of its faculty, students, alumni and supporters. One of the world's top research-intensive universities, U of T brings together top minds from every conceivable background and discipline to collaborate on the world's most pressing challenges.

Project Team:

Project Lead: David Simor, The Centre for Active Transportation
Research Lead: Dr. Ignacio Tiznado Aitken, Department of Human Geography, University of Toronto Scarborough
Lead Writer/Project Support: Jennie Geleff, The Centre for Active Transportation
Project Advisor: Dr. Steven Farber, Department of Human Geography, University of Toronto Scarborough
Research Assistant: Siobhan Teel, Department of Geography and Planning, University of Toronto
Data Analyst: Zehui Yin, Department of Management, University of Toronto Scarborough
Report Design: Devanshi Kukadia, Clean Air Partnership
City of Toronto: Becky Katz, Manager, Cycling and Pedestrian Projects, Department of Transportation & Sonya De Vellis, Coordinator, Bicycle Safety Education, Cycling and Pedestrian Projects, Department of Transportation
Polling Company: Research Co.

Please cite as: Simor, D., Tiznado Aitken, I., Geleff, J., Farber, S., Teel, S., Yin, Z. 2023 *Toronto Cycling Survey*. Toronto: Clean Air Partnership, 2024.

Table of Contents

Key Findings

Key Findings

65% of all respondents have at least one bike in their household

1. Bike ownership in Toronto is widespread but not universal.

65% of all respondents have at least one bike in their household, while 35% of respondents live in a bike-free household. Overall, bike ownership in 2023 is slightly lower in Toronto than it was in 2019, when 74% of respondents reported living in a household with at least one bike. This shift does not account for electric bike ownership, which has likely risen since 2019.

2. Utilitarian cycling continues to increase.

64% of respondents ride a bike in good weather, either for utilitarian purposes (to get to work, school, run errands, etc.) or recreational ones. The majority of respondents across all districts report riding a bike (51% in Scarborough, 57% in Etobicoke, 61% in York, 64% in East York, 64% in North York, and 75% in Old Toronto). The proportion of utilitarian cyclists has more than doubled over the last 25 years (20% in 1999, 29% in 2009, 44% in 2019, 51% in 2023).

TORONTO

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

tcat

Key Findings

Most Torontonians want to cycle more often.

3. People want to cycle more often.

Across Toronto, there is latent interest in cycling. 61% of all respondents agreed with the statement that they would like to travel by bike more than they currently do, and only 10% indicated they already cycle as much as they are going to. While this desire is even more prevalent among younger respondents (74% of respondents under the age of 45 want to cycle more), it is consistent across geography, gender, racial identity, and income level.

4. Most people are supportive of promoting cycling, regardless of whether they currently travel by bike.

There is widespread support for promoting cycling in Toronto. 64% of all respondents are in favour of promoting cycling. Even amongst those who do not ride a bike, 35% are in favour of supporting cycling promotion compared to 20% against it. This is true across the city, with a majority of every district in favour of promoting cycling (66% in North York, 66% in York, 65% in Old Toronto, 64% in East York, 60% in Scarborough, and 54% in Etobicoke).

Key Findings

Feeling insecure in traffic is the main reason people choose not to cycle in Toronto.

5. Lack of safety is the number one barrier to people cycling more often.

Feeling insecure in traffic is the most common factor preventing people across Toronto from cycling (35%). Respondents have a strong preference for infrastructure that creates a clear physical barrier between bikes and car traffic such as raised cycle tracks (59%). 54% of respondents feel comfortable riding a bike on a major street with a bike lane, compared to 35% who feel comfortable riding on a major street without one.

Concerns around safety extend beyond physical safety. 25% of all respondents said that fear of bike theft is a factor that discourages them from cycling more often and 37% of respondents who own a bike have had their bike stolen at least once. Biased traffic enforcement (11%) and streets harassment (10%) were also factors discouraging respondents from cycling more often.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

tcat

Key Findings

Men are more likely than women to own and ride a bike in Toronto.

6. Separated cycling infrastructure inspires cycling confidence and comfort.

In 2019, 35% of respondents were classified as those who would like to travel by bike if they felt safer (Bike Curious), and 27% classified as those who are confident riding a bike if there is dedicated bike infrastructure (Bike Lovers). In 2023, Bike Lovers grew to 36%, while Bike Curious dropped to 22%. The number of those willing to ride regardless of dedicated infrastructure (Bike Fearless) and those who aren't interested in riding at all (Bike Humbugs) remained steady from 2019 to 2023, resulting in a larger population of Torontonians who are confident and enthused about cycling.

7. Cycling in Toronto is gendered.

Women in Toronto are less likely to both own a bike and ride a bike than men. 58% of women own a bike compared to 70% of men; 56% of women ride a bike compared to 70% of men. Women are also less likely to feel comfortable riding on streets without dedicated cycling infrastructure and less likely to rate the quality of cycling infrastructure as good or excellent compared to men. However, women are just as likely to support cycling promotion (63%) as men (66%). This highlights the critical importance of safe infrastructure to create an equitable landscape for cycling in Toronto.

Key Findings

50% of older adults feel comfortable riding on Toronto's trails and multi-use paths.

8. More needs to be done to make Toronto an age-friendly cycling city.

Across the study, those 65 years of age and older are the only sociodemographic group where most respondents (57%) would not consider traveling by bike. Only 30% of respondents aged 65 and older ride a bike in good weather, and 61% live in bike-free households, compared to 84% of respondents aged 18-24 who ride and 22% who live in bike-free households.

The expansion of Toronto's trail and multi-use path system may be an effective strategy for engaging older adults in cycling, as 50% of older adults reported feeling comfortable riding on these types of bikeways. Separated bike lanes from traffic, better enforcement of laws, and better education for people cycling were also common factors identified by older adults for improving cycling in Toronto.

TORONTO

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

tcat

Key Findings

Access to bikes is a major barrier for lower-income individuals.

9. Access to bikes is a major barrier to lower-income individuals.

Respondents with yearly household incomes of $180,000 or more are almost three times as likely to live in a household with a bike compared to those with incomes less than $40,000. 71% of those with incomes greater than $40,000 a year cycle compared to 47% of those with incomes less than $40,000. 57% of those with incomes less than $40,000 desire to cycle more than they currently do. Affordable bikes and e-bikes were the second most common barrier cited by respondents preventing them from cycling more, after safer infrastructure. This suggests that increasing access to bikes among lower-income individuals may be a critical avenue for facilitating widespread cycling uptake in Toronto.

10. Connections between public transit and cycling are growing.

Over the last 15 years, the proportion of cyclists who combine public transit and cycling in one trip has been consistently growing. In 2009, 35% of people who travel by bike reported combining their trips with public transit.

The research team and Research Co. conducted an online survey of 1,681 Toronto residents from October 31- November 7 and November 25 – December 5, 2023. The same is geographically and demographically stratified to be representative of Toronto.

Reporting Conventions

The following terms and symbols have been used to assist in the interpretation of findings. The classification of utilitarian, recreational and non-cyclists was taken from the 1999 study. The classification of bike fearless, bike lovers, bike curious, and bike humbugs was taken from the 2019 study:

- **Cyclists:** Those who ride a bike for commuting and/or recreational purposes. Although people use different modes of transportation on different days to meet different needs, and travel modes shift depending on weather, urgency, and quality of infrastructure, throughout this report, the shorthand "cyclist" is utilized to reference respondents who ride a bike.

- **Non-Cyclists:** Those who do not ride a bicycle.

- **Utilitarian Cyclists:** Those who ride a bike for utilitarian purposes such as commuting to work or school, running errands, going shopping or visiting friends. Utilitarian cyclists may also ride their bicycle for recreation or fitness purposes.

- **Recreational Cyclists:** Those who ride a bike for recreation or fitness purposes only.

- **Strong and Fearless/Bike Fearless:** Those who selected that they are willing to ride a bicycle on the street regardless of traffic without dedicated bike infrastructure like bike lanes.

- **Enthused and Confident/Bike Lover:** Those who selected that they are comfortable sharing streets with cars but prefer to do so using dedicated bike infrastructure like bike lanes.

- **Interested but Concerned/Bike Curious:** Those who selected that they would like to travel by bike if the streets felt safer and there was dedicated bike infrastructure that protected me from traffic.

- **No way, no how/Bike Humbug:** Those who selected that they are not comfortable riding a bicycle even on paths or trails separate from the street; and/or just not interested in cycling.

Reporting Conventions

- **District:** There are six districts in Toronto, comprising of North York, Scarborough, Etobicoke, York, Old Toronto and East York. These correspond to the old boroughs of the city prior to amalgamation.

- **BIPOC:** A term that stands for Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour, that seeks to emphasize the historic oppression faced by these communities. While it can be a useful term when illustrating findings in the data between BIPOC and Non-BIPOC respondents, we also acknowledge the imperfections of this term. Lived experiences of different racial and ethnic groups are not homogenous. Where informative, the data has been broken down to illustrate the different experiences of diverse ethnic communities in Toronto.

- **Non-Heterosexual:** A term that refers to individuals who identify as something other than straight or heterosexual, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, two-spirited, or questioning. As with the term BIPOC, the report uses the term Non-Heterosexual as a shorthand to illustrate differences between how hetero and non-hetero respondents experience cycling in Toronto. We acknowledge that the lived experiences of individuals with diverse sexual identities are not homogeneous.

- **Newcomers:** A term that refers to individuals who were not born in Canada and arrived in the country in the last five years (since 2019).

- **'N':** The symbol 'n' used in graphs throughout the report represents the total number of individuals or observations in the sample.